ARTICLES

Scientology: A Thorn in the Side of Anticultism. Part 5. Modern Persecution of Scientologists in the U.S.

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After the high-profile shutdown of CAN (the Cult Awareness Network) with its deprogrammers and the introduction of the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, attacks on Scientology and the dehumanization of members of the Church of Scientology did not cease in the United States.

Speaking about the psychiatric community as a whole, after the surge of interest in groups labeled as cults during the 1970s and 1980s, psychiatrists lost enthusiasm for this topic.

One reason for this is the **unscientific nature of the term "brainwashing,"** which Margaret Singer from AFF advocated for. Her dispute with the American Psychological Association (APA) lasted at least 7 years, concluding in 1992. The report prepared by Singer's working group openly sought to establish CAN's definitions of "cults," "brainwashing," etc., as official APA definitions. However, APA experts and board members rejected the report, stating: "In general, the report lacks the scientific rigor and evenhanded critical approach necessary for APA imprimatur." [1]

Subsequently, Singer filed a $125 million lawsuit against the APA, claiming that the Association's refusal to endorse her views on so-called mind-control and "brainwashing" have caused "injury to her business and professional reputation"

and caused her “mental anguish and distress” (Singer vs. APA, 1992). [1]

Singer maintained that the theory of “brainwashing” upon which her “expert witness” career depends was based on studies conducted on repatriated prisoners after the Korean War, as well as the Russian purge trials of the 1930s and the “revolutionary universities” of the People’s Republic of China.

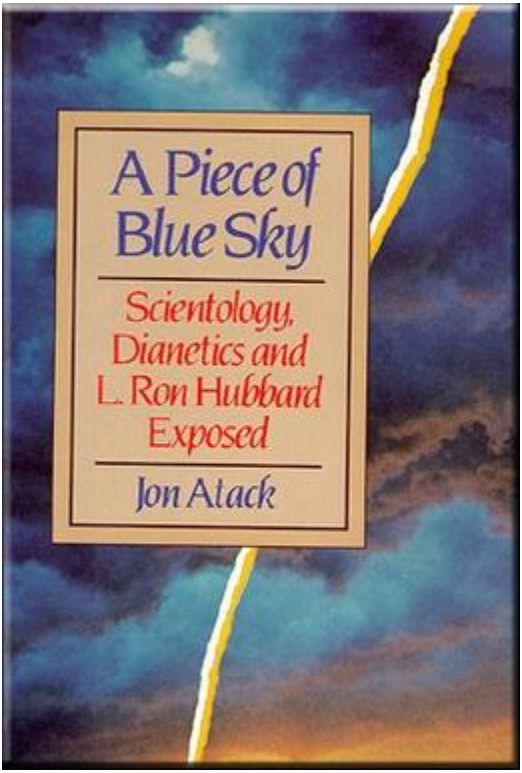
However, examination of the facts by mainstream scholars contradict her arguments. A total of 7,190 American servicemen were captured during the Korean War. Of that number only 21 declined to return to the United States. Of those who returned only 14 were ever court-martialed on the grounds of “going over” to the enemy and only 11 convictions were obtained. Thus **Singer’s contention that communist “brainwashing” succeeded on a large scale just doesn’t hold up** (Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, 1955, pp.78-81). [1]

Although **the term “brainwashing” was never accepted within the scientific community,** it became ubiquitous in the mass media.

Margaret Singer’s arguments in her work boil down to the idea that the only possible way a rational person could choose a

faith or hold religious and/or political views outside the mainstream is if they were "deceived." From this, it follows that deceived or "brainwashed" individuals are incapable of making sound, responsible decisions and **must therefore be stripped of their civil and constitutional rights**.

In 2004, the International Cultic Studies Association created the "Margaret Singer Award" in her honor. [2]

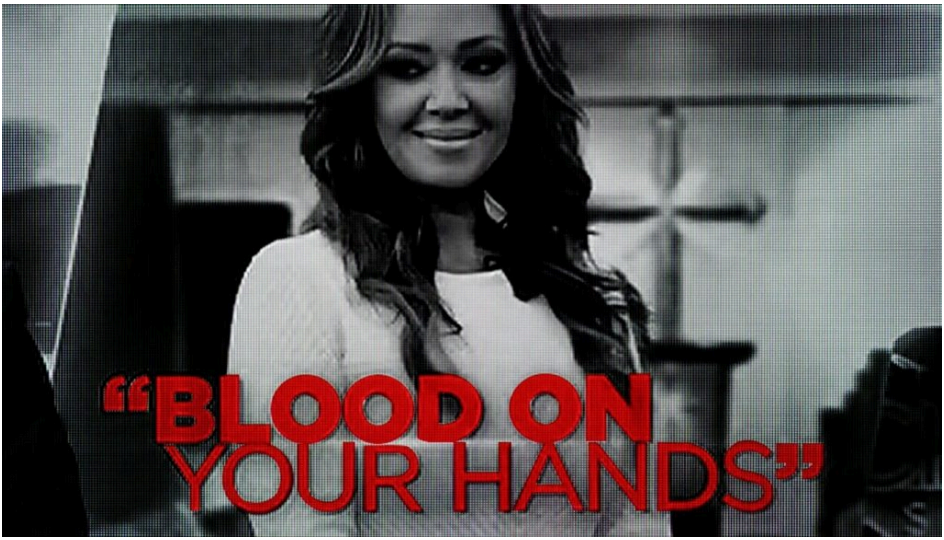


Jon Atack. “A Piece of Blue Sky” book cover

During Singer’s disputes with the APA, ex-Scientologist Jon Atack published his book “A Piece of Blue Sky” (1990). As usual, the Church of Scientology was compelled to respond to yet another attack by defectors. A court ruled that 60 passages from the book had to be removed. Following the trial, Atack’s book became a bestseller, and in 2013, he republished it, reinstating the previously removed sections.

This is not the first time we have seen scandals surrounding Scientology gain significant popularity and prove to be highly

profitable.



Leah Remini

In 2013, actress Leah Remini, who had been in Scientology since the age of nine, officially announced her departure from the Church. She expressed gratitude to her fans for their support:

"I wish to share my sincere and heartfelt appreciation for the overwhelming positive response I have received from the media, my colleagues, and fans from around the world. I am truly grateful and thankful for all your support."[3]

Two years later, Remini released her memoir, "Troublemaker: Surviving Hollywood and Scientology" [4]. The memoir debuted

at number one on The New York Times bestseller list.

Erin McMurtry. Screenshot from the standleague.org website

In 2015, 31-year-old Erin McMurtry called Leah Remini "a true inspiration" on social media. Several days later, McMurtry smashed her car through the front doors of the Church of Scientology in Austin, Texas, stopping just short of the nursery. When she was informed no one was hurt, she replied, "that's too bad." McMurtry was convicted of felony vandalism.

In 2016, Remini launched the TV series on A&E, "Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath," where she created a platform for victims and survivors of Scientology.

The emotional tone of the series incited acts of aggression. For example, in 2016, Andre Barkanov called the Church of

Scientology in Los Angeles and threatened to assassinate the Church leader, the receptionist, her family, Church staff and Scientology parishioners. Barkanov, who was found to have an arsenal of guns, had no direct knowledge of the Church but, when interviewed by the LAPD, stated he made the threat after watching "The King of Queens lady," referencing Remini's character. [5]

Leah Remini's hate-inciting statements resulted in over 600 threats and acts of violence against Scientologists, their children, and their families.

The following are among the hundreds of threats Remini's hate speech has inspired, with many issued within one hour of the broadcast of an episode of her anti-Scientology show:

- *"Literally gonna torch down every scientology center #ScientologyTheAftermath."*
- *"You are dead. I'm going to murder all of you pig cult bastards and blow up all your buildings. You are f***ed."*
- *"You should all kill yourselves. Or come to my neighborhood and let me do it for you."*
- *"I hope someone blows your f***ing building up on live tv!!!" "[I will] join the fight with Leah Remini and do my very best to end your miserable existence!"*
- *"We're gonna f***ing destroy you. Your son and your daughter are gonna suffer. I'm gonna burn your f***ing house. I am gonna f*** you up so f***ing bad."*

- *"I don't watch this show that often... I want to burn down every single Scientology building. EVERY. SINGLE. ONE."* [5]

Police take the teenager who stabbed to death a scientologist Chih-Jen (Aaron) Yeh, on January 3, 2019 in Chatswood into custody

On January 3, 2019, a man, incited by Leah Remini's inflammatory rhetoric, killed 24-year-old Scientologist Aaron Yeh near the Church's Australasian headquarters. [6]

Newspapers internationally published that Leah Remini had blood on her hands. [7]

Remini stated that even after "Scientology and the Aftermath" ends, she will still work to "bring real justice to victims of Scientology but also prevent it from happening in the future — particularly with children." But as she told The Hollywood Reporter, **"I'm not dumb enough to give Scientology a heads up on what we're planning exactly."** [8]

One can't help but ask — who are these "we"?

It brings to mind a statement by Alexander Dvorkin after Scientologists exposed his mental health condition and diagnosis of "cyclothymia" in 2014: **"I know perfectly well what I need to do. But once again, I'll repeat — I won't be disclosing my next steps or plans regarding this matter."** [8]

The Trap of the Anticult Movement's Ideas

While exploring the topic of Scientology, we have repeatedly encountered the same traps set by anticultists.

Here, we aim to delve into how the anticult movement manipulates individuals, where the defector, viewer, or reader falls into the traps of conclusions made by anticultists.

The entire anticult movement rests on the stories of people who, for various reasons, didn't like certain ideas within a religious movement. The anticult movement teaches that religious minorities supposedly harm the mental health of their members. Hundreds of psychological practices have been built on the idea that former members of these religious minorities suffer from some form of mental damage and need to "recover" from it.

The loss of faith and rejection of former religious or spiritual aspirations — regardless of what they were — can undoubtedly become a turbulent time in a defector's life. There's even an expression for it: "Losing my religion."

However, adopting the beliefs of the anticult movement drastically changes the views and attitudes of those

experiencing a loss of faith in their former religion. These changes **can have a deeply destructive impact** and far-reaching consequences for both the defector and society at large.

As a tool for creating new meaning or reinterpreting the past, the ideology of the anticult movement is quite simple. It goes like this:

"You were in a CULT, and you were BRAINWASHED to make you believe what you believed. You were subjected to METHODS OF HYPNOSIS that made you LOSE YOUR CHOICE and adopt beliefs that created AN ENTIRE MATRIX OF THOUGHTS THAT WERE NOT YOUR OWN."

And that's it. The former member adopts this extremely simplified view to reinterpret their past participation, who they were, what they believed, and why they believed it. **The movement against "cults" becomes their new system of beliefs.**

Once the defector finds new meaning, they begin to redefine and rethink every experience they ever had in the "cult." They adopt the ideology of the anticult movement to radically reinterpret everything they once knew about themselves and their past life. The anticultist's goal is to make the defector ashamed of their past in the religious movement.

What they once called “religion,” they now call a “cult.” What once inspired them with sacred ideas now seems so profane that it makes them sick. What they once took pride in now brings them shame. What they once considered reasonable, they now see as delusion.

Thus, the defector’s views become radicalized. They arrive at a simple explanation for everything that happened to them before: “I was brainwashed!” This is precisely what anticultists aim for — turning a person, who should always make their own choices, into a mere victim of manipulation by a “dangerous cult.” This explains the almost manic desire of defectors to radicalize their entire experience in the “cult,” “expose” it, and frame even neutral events in an extremely negative light. They are driven by resentment toward the “cult” leaders and the belief — instilled by anticultists — that they were deceived and “brainwashed.”

That’s where we must recall Dvorkin’s words again: “It should be noted that not everyone is prone to joining a sect. There is a particular risk group characterized by low emotional states, reduced critical thinking, heightened suggestibility, and psychological and mental instability. Thus, **this group cannot be unequivocally considered psychologically and mentally healthy.”**

The anticult movement is most interested in people who have spent a significant amount of time in a religious movement. These individuals possess extensive knowledge about the "cult," which can later be twisted and used against that "cult." Such defectors become zealous fighters against "cults." Infected by anticult ideas, they often go on to fight against other groups labeled as cults, participating in anticult symposiums, conferences, and round tables worldwide. For instance, Jerry Armstrong, a Scientology defector, spoke at international conferences, including the 2001 event "Totalitarian Sects of Siberia" in Russia. John Atack participates in FECRIS and ICSA conferences, and Leah Remini now attacks Jehovah's Witnesses as well.

In all these attacks on religious movements revolve purely around moral arguments. For this reason, former members typically do not file lawsuits simply because they dislike someone in a "cult" or disapprove of something from their personal moral standpoint. After all, such matters do not constitute crimes under U.S. law. Anticultists are fully aware of this, which is why they create emotionally charged narratives — stories and articles filled with rumors and exaggerations — to stir up emotions, incite public outrage, and provoke hate crimes. This emotional uproar is necessary to pressure authorities into banning targeted organizations.

The mechanism of "puzzle coding" used by anticultists to manipulate people into committing crimes is explored in "The IMPACT" documentary.

That is how numerous laws in Russia appeared at anticultists' instigation, addressing the so-called "moral issues." One example is Russia's law "on offending religious feelings," where even a selfie in front of a church can result in criminal charges if someone deems it offensive. This is why we repeatedly hear anticultist attacks on the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, claiming it contradicts human nature. Just look at what has become of human rights in Russia.

Conclusions

Now more than ever, Scientology faces intensified attacks and persecution in the U.S. itself, a country where democratic laws are not just empty words. This is a very alarming sign, given how anticultists treat the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "The IMPACT" documentary, which we have referenced in multiple articles, outlines in detail how anticultists plan to dismantle the United States and, along with it, the last stronghold of democracy in the world. What we've observed in the example of Scientology is yet another step bringing anticultists closer to their ultimate goal — the

establishment of a totalitarian regime across the planet with its Nazi practices.

Impact

As we have shown in our series of articles on Scientology, the world hasn't rid itself of Nazism. It has returned, reincarnating as anticultism. Having started in Germany, it is once again returning there with its sect filters. The most frightening part is that German authorities believe they are protecting democracy by employing such measures. Let us remind you that the Nazis in Germany once justified their actions in the exact same way, claiming that ultimate peace could only be achieved by exterminating the Jews.

Now imagine that the country that suffered the greatest loss of life during World War II fighting Nazism has become a hub for its rebirth and its ideological center. The ideologue and new Führer is none other than Alexander Dvorkin — a mentally ill individual, operating under the aegis of the Russian Orthodox Church.

We have demonstrated a clear link between global anticultism and psychiatry, revealing that anticultism uses psychiatry as a punitive tool to justify its actions and achieve its goals, just as it was done in Nazi Germany.

It is easy to understand global anticultism's hatred of Scientology. Early on, L. Ron Hubbard provided Church members with clear guidance to never let attacks on the Church go unchallenged and to always defend themselves using all legal means available. This has helped Scientologists thwart the global plans of anticultism at least three times by taking an active civic stance, founding human rights organizations, and defending laws on religious freedom.

The question remains: Where are those who are supposed to safeguard democracy? After all, since humanity defeated Nazism, the foundations of democracy have been reinforced and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At that time, the world declared, "Never again." Yet, what do we

see now? Global anticultism — Nazism — has spread across the world like a plague right under the watchful eye of the human rights community.

It has become clear that people must recognize the threat posed by anticultism, a threat to our rights and freedoms. We must also understand that the least we can do to combat this phenomenon is to prevent it from dominating, starting at least with our own minds.

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